

## Message Text

PAGE 01    DACCA 06131 130546Z  
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2855  
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA  
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 6131

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, BG  
SUBJECT: THE DETAINED POLITICAL LEADERS

REF: DACCA 6117

1. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE RUMORS THAT ABOUT ONE HUNDRED POLITICIANS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN PICKED UP BY BDG, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED NAMES OF ONLY 11. THESE INCLUDE SIX FROM THE AWAMI LEAGUE (MOST NOTABLE FORMER SPEAKER ABDUL MALIK UKIL, ACTING GENERAL SECRETARY SAJEDA CHOUDHURY), FOUR FROM DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE (MUSHTAGUE, EX-MINISTERS OBAIDUR RAHMAN AND SHAH MOAZZEM HOSSAIN, AND ITTEFAQ CO-OWNER MOINUL HUSSAIN, WHO HAS BEEN CLOSE TO MUSHTAQUE POLITICALLY) AND ONE FROM MUZAFFAR FACTION OF NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY. OUR SOURCES ARE UNANIMOUS IN STATING ACTING AWAMI LEAGUE PRESIDENT MOHIUDDIN AHMAD IS WANTED AND ABSCONDING.

2. FEAR OF POSSIBLE INTERFERENCE BY INDIA, BEYOND THAT OF BORDER INCURSIONS, WHICH IS PERVASIVE HERE AND HELD BY ALL LEVELS FROM ZIA DOWN TO THE STREET, ISSUALLY GIVEN AS EXPLANATION FOR ARREST OF AWAMI LEAGUERS AND MEMBERS OF NAP/M. LOCAL INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE BELIEVE BOTH PARTIES ARE RECEIVING FUNDS AND GUIDANCE FROM INDIA AND GO BEYOND THIS TO BELIEVE AWAMI LEAGUE WISHES TO CREATE LAW AND ORDER PROBLEM  
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PAGE 02    DACCA 06131 130546Z

IN BANGLADESH WHICH MIGHT PROVIDE INDIA OPPORTUNITY TO INTERVENE TO RESTORE ORDER AND AWAMI LEAGUE REGIME. WHILE WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS EXTREME VIEW, IT IS QUESTIONABLE THAT THIS PERCEPTION IS PREVALENT. REPORT-

EDLY IN RECENT MEETING IN MYMENSINGH, ARRESTED AWAMI LEAGUERS AND OTHERS FROM THE PARTY ALSO DESCRIBED ZIA AS ATTEMPTING TO EMULATE AYUB AND IMPOSE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP ON COUNTRY. AS AYUB RANKS AT TOP OF AWAMI LEAGUE DEMONOLOGY ALONG WITH YAHYA, THIS WAS SEEN BY INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE AS CALL FOR DEMONSTRATIONS TO SAVE COUNTRY FROM ANOTHER REIGN SUCH AS THAT OF 1958-71.

3. OUR CONTACTS ARE LESS UNANIMOUS ON REASONS FOR THE ARREST OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEAGUERS. MUSHTAQUE DID PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY WITH HIS STATEMENT OPPOSING THE POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS, BUT IN OUR READING IT WAS MODERATELY STATED AND HARDLY A SUMMONS TO INSURRECTION. TWO OTHER EXPLANATIONS HAVE BEEN OFFERED BY THOSE WHO WE HAVE MET. ONE IS THAT MUSHTAQUE STILL HAS FOLLOWERS IN THE ARMY AND THAT HE WAS BECOMING A FOCUS OF DISCONTENT THERE. A SECOND IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WISHED TO CREATE IMPRESSION, JUST PRIOR TO FARAKKA MEETINGS, THAT ROUND UP WAS NOT DIRECTED SOLELY AT THOSE POLITICIANS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO BE MORE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD INDIA AND MUSHTAQUE PROVIDED MEANS FOR HIS ARREST BY ISSUANCE OF STATEMENT WHICH WAS DRAFTED BY MOINUL HUSSAIN. WE TEND NOW TO ACCEPT THEORY THAT STATEMENT WAS KEY TO HIS ARREST AND THAT OF HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES AS ZIA IS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO ANY INTERNAL OPPOSITION.

4. VIEWS EXPRESSED TO US SEEM TO INDICATE GENERAL APPROVAL OF TWO OF ZIA'S RECENT ACTIONS (ELECTION POSTPONEMENT AND ASSUMPTION OF CMLA POSITION), BUT ARE LESS FAVORABLE TO ARRESTS. REASONS FOR THIS INCLUDE OPINION THAT NONE OF POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE ABILITY TO DISTURB GOVERNMENT AND THAT ARRESTS AT TIME OF EID-UL-AZHA, A PERIOD IN WHICH BROTHERHOOD SHOULD BE SHOWN, IS INAPPROPRIATE. WE WOULD TEND TO AGREE THAT PERCEPTION OF POTENTIAL THREAT FROM ARRESTED LEADERS AND THEIR PARTIES IS PROBABLY EXAGGERATED, BUT CLEARLY ZIA AND HIS REGIME THINK OTHERWISE.

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PAGE 03     DACCA 06131 130546Z

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